

2018 Voting Machine Logic and Accuracy Testing



August 6th, 2018, the Canvassing Board of Charlotte County met to conduct the Logic and Accuracy (L&A) testing of our county voting machines. This is a mandated test by [Florida Statute 101.5612](#) and the test was publicly announced as required. Notification was delivered to the Charlotte County Democrats and

[also posted on CharlotteVotes.com](#). These tests are open to the public, and by statute, all political parties may also send observers.

"Each political party may designate one person with expertise in the computer field who shall be allowed in the central counting room when all tests are being conducted and when the official votes are being counted."

David Finster attended this test as a representative of the Charlotte County Democrats and provides this report.

Location and Attendees

The test was conducted in two locations, first at the [Elections Warehouse, 25510 Airport Road, Punta Gorda](#), and from there continued at the office of the [Supervisor of Elections, 226 Taylor Street in Punta Gorda](#).

The Supervisor of Elections [Hon. Paul A. Stamoulis](#), and [Hon. John L. Burns](#) officiated and certified the inspection of the tabulation equipment, assisted by the Canvassing Board staff.

Observing at the elections warehouse were:

- **Raul Fernandez** – Treasurer, Republican Party of Charlotte County
- **David Finster** – Charlotte County Democrats
- **Cara Reynolds** – Candidate for Charlotte County School Board, District 1
- **Stan Smith** – Candidate for Airport Authority District 4
- **Robert Starr** – State Committeeman, Republican Party of Charlotte County

Election Warehouse – Test Environment

The testing commenced at 9:00 am. The observers were asked to sign the visitor log and provided chairs in a marked section of the warehouse about 20 feet from the machines.

Supervisor Stamoulis greeted us warmly and commented that this was a large crowd, the most people ever attending the L&A test. He invited the observers to approach, observe and ask questions as the testing proceeded. He then gave a brief introduction of his staff and description of the election warehouse security.

For security, access to the warehouse is tightly controlled. The doors are locked, protected by an alarm system and affixed with tamper-resistant adhesive seals which are inspected before each entry and replaced after each exit.

We were not permitted to take photographs inside the warehouse. If you'd like to see an example of an L&A test, here is a broadcast from Miami/Dade County in

2016. They use the same model machines and this is very similar to the testing conducted in Charlotte County.

Supervisor Stamoulis introduced the Canvassing Board staff, who are well trained and very professional. The Master Florida Certified Elections Professional (MFCEP) designation is awarded to individuals that complete all three levels of Florida Certified Election Professionals training. Charlotte County boasts an impressive number of certified election professionals. Eleven are currently shown on the [Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections website](#).

[You can read more about our Charlotte County staff at CharlotteVotes.com.](#)

Election Warehouse – About The Machines

Two different machines were available for inspection. Both machines are manufactured by Election Systems and Software (ES&S).

- The [ES&S ExpressVote® Universal Voting System](#), an ADA compliant voting solution.
- The [ES&S DS200®](#) paper ballot counter and vote tabulator.

These machines are not connected to the Internet.

About the ExpressVote

The ExpressVote touch-screen device can be controlled by touchscreen, hand controller or by [sip-and-puff](#) control and has headphones for audio feedback among the assistive technologies. Voters are supposed to bring their own sip-and-puff device, but Supervisor Stamoulis also provides them and his team is trained in proper use.



ExpressVote can be used in a marking or tabulating role. In Charlotte County, the ExpressVote is used as a ballot marking device that produces a paper ballot. The ballot consists of a series of barcodes followed by human-readable text. The barcodes are then read by the DS200

scanner. Because Charlotte County only uses ExpressVote as a marking device, no tests or live demonstration was performed on these devices. The Florida statute only requires testing the machines used for tabulation. No ballots generated by an ExpressVote machine were used in today's tests.

The City of Virginia Beach has an excellent short video demonstrating the ExpressVote system.

About the DS200

Voters cast their votes with either paper hand-marked ballots or paper bar-code ballots generated by the ExpressVote system. These ballots are then scanned by the DS200 vote tabulator.



The DS200 ballot counter scans and securely stores the paper ballots in a locked compartment.

The votes are tabulated onto a USB flash drive, which is secured in a different locked compartment. At the end of each voting day, the compartment is opened. The flash drive is removed and placed into a container which is sealed and witnessed by two people from different political parties who sign the seal. The container of tabulation media is taken to the Charlotte County Historic Courthouse where it is unsealed by two witnesses. The USB drives are then read by the central tabulation machine to generate election reports.

The paper ballots are also sealed, witnessed and then moved to the Supervisor of Elections vault. They are stored for 22 months and then may be destroyed

pursuant to statute. Unused ballots are destroyed after permission is requested and granted from the state. Ballots are destroyed by shredding.

More information about the DS200 [is available at CharlotteVotes.com](https://CharlotteVotes.com). Voters wanting to familiarize themselves with the DS200 can watch this short instructional video produced by the City of Virginia Beach.

Election Warehouse – Testing Process

For the Primary Election, Charlotte County will use 6 machines for early voting and 58 machines on election day. Florida law requires testing either all machines or a sample of machines. If a sample is tested, the law requires that:

“the sample shall consist of a random selection of at least 5 percent or 10 of the devices for an optical scan system, whichever is greater.”

10 machines were tested in this L&A exercise. All machines to be tested were already open and placed in a row when the observers arrived. How these 10 machines were selected was not discussed.

The testing began by powering up each machine and commanding each machine to print a “zero tape” to ensure the machines were blank. These zero tapes were inspected and certified by Supervisor Stamoulis and Judge Burns. Both of them signed each tape, and all tapes from these tests are preserved. These tabulation tapes appeared to be thermal paper tape, similar to retail receipts.

Next, the machines were tested by running pre-marked test ballots. The correct outcome of these ballots was known beforehand and included ballots that were deliberately marked as over-votes, or votes for more than one candidate in a single race. Some ballots were designated as Early Voting ballots and some as Election day ballots.

Testing took nearly an hour. While waiting and observing, I asked several questions.

The Assistant Supervisor explained that although it was not part of this L&A test, additional tests are performed with partially-filled circles or marks made outside the circles. The machines are quite sensitive for these sorts of marks and will report those ballots as indeterminate votes to be reviewed to determine the voter’s intent.

I was told after the election there will be an audit from one or possibly more precincts.

Supervisor Stamoulis told us that CharlotteVotes.com is ranked in the top 5 election websites in the State of Florida by the [Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections](#).

I also learned a few statistics about our county.

- 40% of voters vote by mail
- 30% vote during early voting
- 30% vote on election day

Supervisor Stamoulis has discretion on the number of days allowed for early voting and has chosen 14 early voting days, the maximum allowed by law. This gives all Charlotte County registered voters the greatest opportunity to vote.

At 9:50 am, the test tabulation was complete. Supervisor Stamoulis and Judge Burns signed and certified the paper tapes from each machine, and announced this portion of the test passed with 100% accuracy.

Supervisor Stamoulis ordered the machines opened and the USB flash drive media removed. All USB drives were identified by paper tags for tracking. They were placed into a tamper-resistant pouch, similar to a banker's bag. It was clear plastic on one side and green fabric on the other. The bag was zipped closed, and a tamper seal was secured on the zipper.

We were asked to exit the warehouse and the door was locked and an adhesive tamper-resistant seal placed on the door. We then drove to the courthouse.

Supervisor Of Elections Office – Test Environment

The Secretary of Elections (SOE) office is located on the first floor of the Punta Gorda Historic Courthouse.

At the courthouse, we met the Canvassing Board team. The observers were joined by **Joan Fischer** – Candidate for County Commissioners District 4. Cara Reynolds excused herself to attend to another commitment.

This office contains the tabulation machines used for Vote by Mail ballots, the Election Reporting Manager system and other computers and office equipment used by the SOE staff. There is a vault on the second floor for storage of ballots and media. We did not visit the vault.

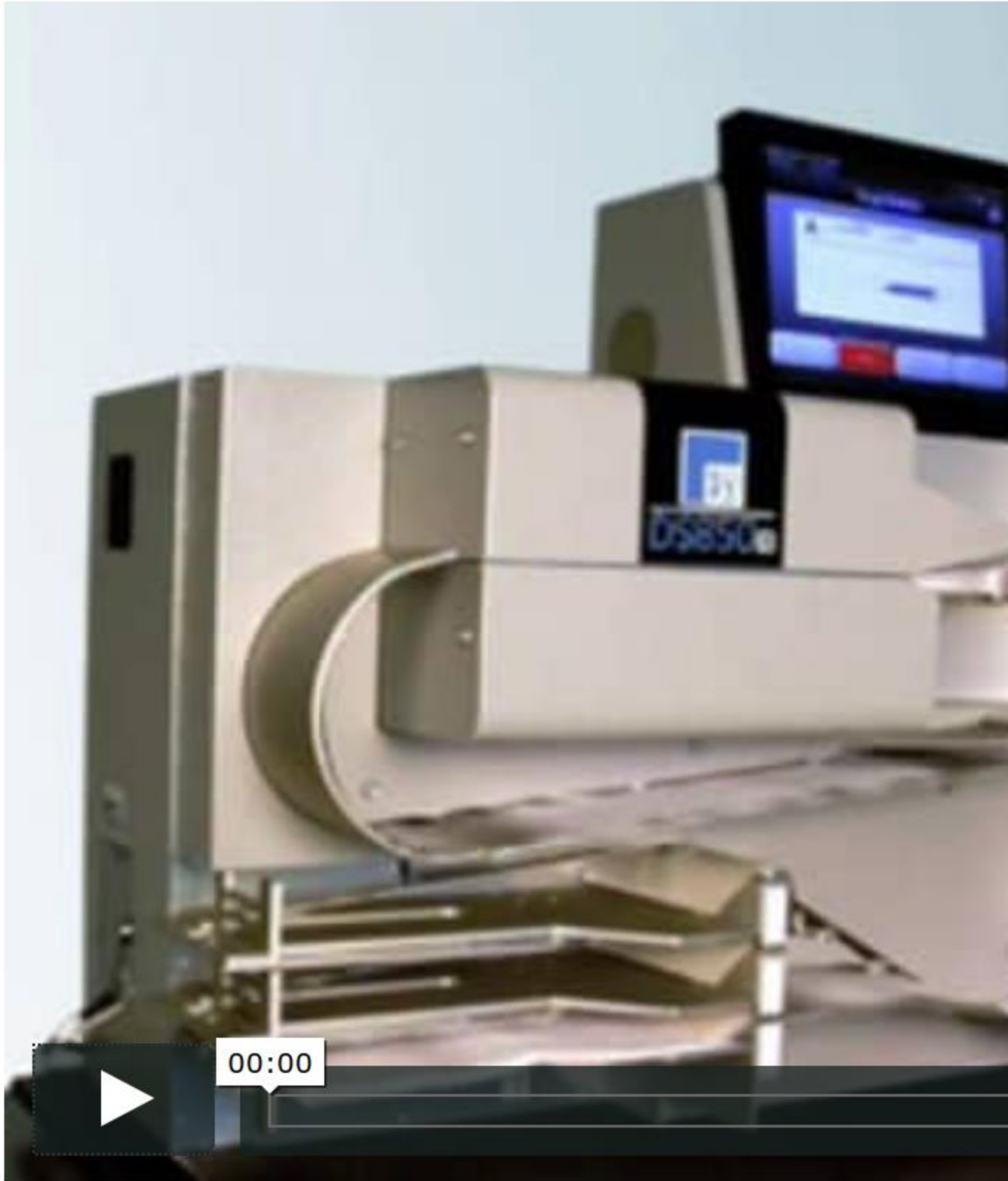
SOE Office – About the Machines

The DS850



We were allowed to inspect the [ES&S DS850® high-speed tabulation machines](#). These are new for this election cycle and used to count the Vote By Mail ballots. Charlotte County owns two of these machines, one primary and one backup. Both machines were tested today. According to ES&S, the DS850 “scans and sorts 14-inch double-sided ballots at 300 per minute into three output bins, separating ballots into three categories: counted, requires further review, and write-ins.” I can attest that it’s an impressive machine to watch in action.

Here is a short demonstration of the DS850.



For the Early Voting USB drives, many different precincts' votes will be collected by a single DS200 machine. When importing these USB drives, the management software prompts the operator for each precinct with an opportunity to make a decision as to how to proceed. The usual course of action is to press the Accept button. When importing, the operator must click this button in quick succession as the Windows dialog pops up many times, one time per precinct. The buttons and menus are quite small and require a skilled operator to avoid mistakes. I do not know the procedure used if a mouse error is made during this process.

SOE Office – Testing Process

The testing process was similar to the testing performed at the election warehouse. The observers were asked to sign a visitor log and provided chairs in the room. We were invited to move about the room if desired, observe and ask questions.

Many hundreds of test ballots were prepared and scanned through both DS850 machines. Each produced a tabulation tape report. Some paper ballots were rejected as unreadable during the test, and I was told these were deliberately unreadable ballots used to verify the machines.

The tabulation tapes were verified by Supervisor Stamoulis and Judge Burns. They both signed and certified the tapes were 100% accurate. The flash drive media was removed from the DS850 machines and passed to the Assistant Supervisor who prepared to receive them in the Election Reporting Manager system.

The previously sealed bag of flash drives from the election warehouse was unsealed. The USB drives were sorted and arranged on the table. This resulted in three categories of USB drives.

- Absentee vote results from the DS850 machines
- Early voting results from the DS200 machines
- Election day results from the DS200 machines

Each drive was inserted into the USB port in turn and votes collected by the Election Reporting Manager system.

After the USB drives were processed, the software produced a paper report on the adjacent laser printer. These reports were examined, compared against the paper tapes generated by the DS200 and DS850 tabulators, then signed and certified that the results matched the known expected results.

Supervisor Stamoulis and Judge Burns declared the results 100% accurate and the test was complete.

More Information

While waiting for the test ballots to be scanned, we had an opportunity to discuss several other items with Supervisor Stamoulis.

He explained that on election day, your signature is confirmed against your photo ID, not your signature on file with the Supervisor of Elections. For Vote By Mail ballots, your signature is verified against the signature on your voter registration application.

If voting by mail, you will be notified if there is a discrepancy in your signature. You may come to the office and cure your signature issue anytime prior to 5:00 pm the day before election day. He stated this was normally a minuscule problem. In addition, all members of his team are certified every two years in handwriting analysis. This is not a State of Florida requirement, it is his requirement for Charlotte County.

He explained there are three ways a Vote By mail ballot can be used.

- You can mail it in and have it counted.
- You can bring it to a polling location where it will be destroyed and traded for an election day ballot.
- You can bring it to a polling location pre-filled as a voter guide. A poll worker will remove some of the "timing marks" from the edge of the ballot so it cannot be run through a tabulator. This invalidates the ballot before you take it to the voting booth. You are allowed to copy your pre-filled vote by mail ballot to a new ballot.

Joan Fisher asked why the political party is identified on the vote by mail envelope. Supervisor Stamoulis said this was state law, and the envelopes are designed by the state. He had no input on the ballot or envelope design. He did agree that it seemed unnecessary.

Next Steps

Charlotte County voters have more opportunities and a responsibility to be involved in our election process. There is [a public notice published](#) at CharlotteVotes.com with more dates and times for important events. Here is an excerpt.

The Charlotte County Canvassing Board will convene pursuant to Florida Statutes 101.68, Tuesday, August 14th, 2018 at 10:00 am to canvass the Vote By Mail ballots for the Primary Election. They will meet at the Supervisor of Elections office, 226 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda. The Canvassing Board will reconvene as necessary through August 28th, 2018 to continue canvassing the Vote By Mail. The Canvassing Board will meet on August 30th, 2018 at 5:00 pm to certify the Unofficial and Official Results. Provisional Ballots will be also be canvassed on August 30th, 2018 at 5pm.

In accordance with the Sunshine Law of Florida, the above meetings will be open to the public.

NOTE: Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, states that if a person decides to appeal any decision by a board, agency, or commission with respect to any matter considered at a meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

Charlotte County Democrats are glad to fulfill our responsibility to participate in this election procedure. We thank Supervisor Stamoulis for his hospitality and generous access to this important test of our voting system.

EXPRESSVOTE®, DS200®, AND DS850® ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF ELECTION SYSTEMS AND SOFTWARE, LLC.

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